

39 More on the Seacole Fund of 1867
by Dr Douglas J Austin 39 [TWC 31(4) p6 2014]

Further to my article "The Mary Seacole Funds of 1857 and 1867" published in "The War Correspondent", 30(4), pp 26-29, January, 2013, I was much pleased to find the following newspaper item, which neatly anticipated my own assessment of the Seacole Fund Appeals by some 146 years! Some will affect to ignore this supporting evidence of Seacole's services, but they will be hard pushed, I fancy, to explain it away...

"Morning Post", 4th February, 1867

THE SEACOLE FUND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING POST.

Sir, — It is impossible that any of those who knew Mrs. Seacole in her days of prosperity can read the appeal made in your columns to-day on her behalf without feeling the deepest commiseration that such an appeal should be necessary. I feel sure there is not a man — soldier or sailor — who served in the Crimea, and knew "Old Mother Seacole," as she was familiarly called, who will not gladly testify to the disinterested kindness she invariably showed to everybody with whom she came in contact. The fact that her Majesty takes a kind interest in her future welfare, and that the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, and the Duke of Cambridge are patrons of the fund, and that the committee is composed of several leading and influential men in both services, will, I trust, induce many unconnected with the army and navy to assist in securing a trifling independence for the old lady; for the public may be very certain that her case would not receive such high patronage unless her services were deserving of recognition and reward from the nation. As one who has met with many little acts of kindness at her hands I ask your permission to be allowed to draw attention to the fact that she is sadly in want. — Your obedient servant,

HAMILTON HUME.

9, Waterloo-place, Feb. 1.



Hume's letter appears to have caused no offence to Royalty, because *"The Times"* records that he was presented to Edward, Prince of Wales, at the Court Levée on May 29th, 1867. Hamilton Hume (1797-1873) was a notable early explorer of Australia and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society in 1860. He may have received some "doctress" treatments from Mary Seacole? A further connection with her may have stemmed from his acting as Honorary Secretary

of "The Eyre Defence and Aid Fund", arguing that Governor Edward John Eyre had acted decisively in the brutal suppression of the "*Morant Bay Rebellion*" in Jamaica, which began on October 11, 1865. In the end, 439 black Jamaicans were killed directly by soldiers, and 354 more were arrested and later executed, some without proper trials. Other punishments included flogging for over 600 men and women (including some pregnant women), and long prison sentences, while thousands of homes belonging to blacks were burnt down to restore order. Hume published a 320-page book "*The Life of Edward John Eyre*" in 1867. (Eyre was twice charged with murder, but the cases never proceeded.)